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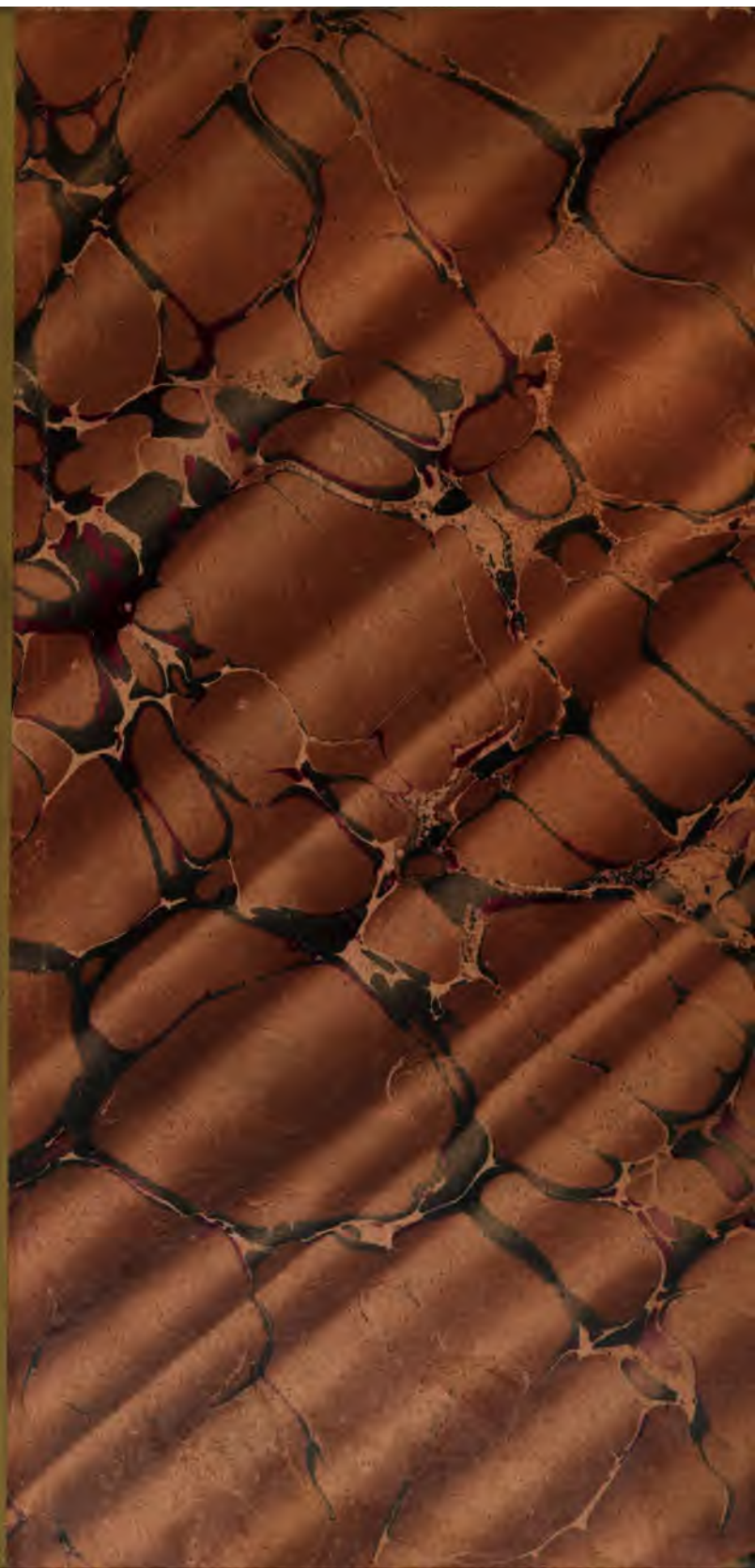
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Frith - "Evangelicalism" 1877

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"EVANGELICALISM,"

FROM

THE STAND-POINT

OF

The Society of Friends.

BY

FRANCIS FRITH.

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ON SOME FEATURES OF
EVANGELISTIC TEACHING,
FROM
THE STAND-POINT OF THE
SOCIETY OF FRIENDS.

I HAVE been furnished by a friend with the following questions, which, although by no means embracing the whole subject, suggest the chief peculiarities of certain religious teaching which has lately taken considerable hold of the public mind, and has probably influenced, more or less, all existing Christian societies.

It is no new doctrine, having re-appeared in various shapes and modifications from an early period of the Church. But it is only within the last few years that it has again come into much prominence in connection with American Revivalism, and its counterpart in this country. It has no likeness to the teaching of John Wesley; and the Methodists, even now, as a body, evince little sympathy with it. It is quite contrary to the doctrines of the Established Church, of the Independents, of the Baptists, and of the Society of Friends. With the profession of the latter body, it is especially at variance: and yet it is probable that amongst the Friends in some places it is more publicly taught, at the present time, than elsewhere; for it will scarcely be found to be preached, in anything like the extreme form which we are about to consider, in any other *settled* community in England.

The questions are these :—

1st.—Seeing that it is said “The Gospel is the power of God unto salvation, to every one that believeth,” when does a man receive that salvation ?

2nd.—Does the death of Christ cover or atone for all the sins of the believer ?

3rd.—The believer is said to be in Christ, and Christ in him by His spirit. Does he cease to be in Christ and cease to have life, the moment he sins, after he is justified ?

To the first question, my friend’s answer would be—That a man *is saved*, receives a full and complete salvation, the moment he believes.

To the second—Yes ; which, if it has any definite meaning, is as much as to say that “a believer” cannot thenceforth fall into any sin which is not pre-forgiven, rendered altogether harmless and ineffectual—so far as his salvation or condemnation are concerned.

To the third, it would be said—That being a *son*, if he sins, he is chastened and brought back to love and duty. It could not be admitted that he is again *forgiven*, because it has previously been argued that—being a believer, and therefore “in Christ Jesus,” to such “there is no condemnation.” Having received salvation when he believed, the death of Christ *has* covered all his sins ; so that he does not cease to be in a justified state when he sins after conversion.

This is called the doctrine of Assurance. But, in order to appreciate the full scope and importance of this teaching, it will be needful to append certain other matters which are usually associated with it, and which indeed are necessary to complete a consistent creed.

The doctrine of Justification by Faith is one which all Christians hold, in one sense or other, as necessary to salvation. It is viewed very differently, as we shall see, *beyond a certain point* ; but it may be defined to an extent which will perhaps be admitted by all to include its essential and saving efficacy. Thus :—

It is the entire forgiveness to the truly penitent believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, of all *past* sin; so that it shall never again be laid to his charge; it is the free gift of God through Jesus Christ.

But, in order to Justification, Repentance is necessary, and the question is, what *is* true repentance? Consider the primary importance which is given to it in the Gospels. The greatest of the prophets was sent to preach it, in order to "prepare the way of the Lord;" and our Lord Himself commenced His ministry, everywhere, with the same solemn requirement—"Repent!"

But we hear it now defined simply as "a desire to be saved." It need not, we are told, "be very long about."

It is *not* taught that it involves a great work of the Holy Spirit, conviction for sin, godly sorrow, deep and genuine. No mention is made of counting the cost, nor of cross-bearing and self-denial. The sinner is not given to understand that it is a strait gate which he has to enter, and that he *must* be prepared to walk thenceforth in a narrow way. Nothing in fact is said about any covenant-signing on the part of the receiver of this priceless gift. Also there is no reservation, either made or implied, as to the possibility of anyone not being in a condition to "accept" salvation; *every person is assumed to be so at any time* by a mere effort of the human will. Thus, it is understood, is expressed the "freeness" of the offer.

And then, an immediate and complete salvation is proclaimed. The doctrine of instantaneous conversion from a state of deep and wilful sinfulness to one of perfect peace and safety, is held; not as a possibility,—as an outward miracle is possible,—but as a frequent, if not the usual and most acceptable way.

A "complete" salvation is offered in this sense: that when a man believes, he is at once "in Christ," and if *in* Christ then complete in Him. Either he *is* saved, or he is *not* saved. He cannot be *more* than saved. Nothing that can happen to him subsequently—of sanctification, or preparation

of heart for the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, and for union with the Saviour—can enhance his state of salvation, or his preparation for heaven. As to the possibilities of his future life upon the earth,—well, he *has* eternal life actually in his possession. Nothing can separate him from the love of Christ. He has the full assurance of faith, and goes on his way rejoicing always in the Lord; he is already “saved,” and has nothing to fear, and nothing to do, that can concern his salvation, or his acceptability here or hereafter, in the sight of his Maker.

If then, through the weakness of the flesh, he should fall into sin, that need not trouble him much. He must expect it; it *must* be so to the end. *It is not he that sins, but sin that dwells in him.* It is the old nature that sins which, although not really dead, is now “reckoned” so. His real self, the new life which is given him at conversion, cannot sin, because it is born of God. It is hid with Christ in God, and is therefore safe.

As a corollary to this, we are told that the Christian as soon as he believes, is entitled to enter, at once, into his full state of rest. All the promises are immediately his; he has only to appropriate them by faith. It does not matter that he finds his old evil inclinations unsubdued and still leading him captive; he is not to “mind his feelings.” He must look away from them, and from himself; he is not to expect to have any “satisfaction in himself.”

The “finished work of Christ” is spoken of as the Law of Righteousness fulfilled by our Lord Himself, in order that men *need not* fulfil it. He is “our Righteousness.” No mere man can possibly fulfil the Divine Law,—or, in other words, the commandments of Christ. He has fulfilled all righteousness for (instead of) man; so that although everything that even a “saved” man can think or do is still tainted with his sinful nature,—is essentially unholy,—is but “filthy rags,”—is, in fact, no way different, as far as its goodness is concerned, from what he did before, yet, by virtue of his faith in Christ, the

sinfulness of his heart and life, although "sought for" is "not found;" iniquity, though still rampant in him, is not "beheld." He is "reckoned" righteous.

Following this we shall not be surprised to hear that all that a man does or can do, previous to that definite moment in which he is supposed to be "converted" or saved, is iniquity,—is "deadly doing;" it is all wrought in sin, of the nature of sin, and therefore displeasing to God.

And further, after conversion, it is often disallowed that any good thing is done, or is required to be done, *by* the believer, *with the assistance* of Divine grace. *He can still* do nothing but evil, for his nature is not changed, but only "reckoned" dead. When he does what is right he is but a passive instrument in the hands of God;—a mere tool *with* which Christ Himself, who possesses him, works and acts, so that neither his evil nor his good works, after conversion, are *his*, in any intelligible sense.

So much for the positive aspects of Evangelicalism. But, beside the matters referred to under the head of Repentance, there are others of no less importance which are practically negatived. The people are not taught that Christ is the Light as well as the Life of the world. Little or nothing is said about the work of the Holy Spirit in convincing the world of sin, nor of the sin of "turning away from Him who now speaketh from Heaven."

His absolute prerogative to make the effectual offer of salvation to each individual, *when and how He will*; His further great and essential work of carrying on and perfecting the redemption and salvation of the soul "by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost,—thoroughly purging his floor, and burning up the chaff with unquenchable fire,"—"sitting as a refiner with fire and as a fuller with soap,"—chastening the believer in order that he may be "partaker of His Holiness;"—thus becoming "the author of eternal salvation to all those that obey Him,—the finisher as well as the author of our faith;" all these things are passed over, or set aside, as though they were no essential parts of the Gospel of Christ.

The case, thus definitely put, may seem to some to be overstated. Even some of those who sympathise with the popular religious movements of the day may be startled by the dangerous tendency of the whole creed. They may say, "This or that is not exactly what we mean." To which I reply—All that I have stated is commonly taught, and I think that the simplest answers that could be given to my friend's questions by teachers of that school would involve, at the very least, what I have formulated. By many, doubtless, it will all be acknowledged and professed.

It is manifestly a very extreme creed; reproducing some of the worst errors of Calvinism, and of those fearful Antinomian heresies which have at various periods devastated the Church. Now there may be a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. It is notable that errors which result most calamitously are often held and propagated by persons who are themselves, to a large extent, sincere and pious, and in connection with the highest truth. They are possibly not aware of the nature and tendency of the doctrines they espouse. But the consequences of their teaching are none the less disastrous to the Church. History furnishes many striking instances of this. A typical case is the austere and able, but unspeakably mischievous man, John Calvin. It would have been well for the Church, I should think, if he had never been born.

Let us now inquire what is the belief of the Society of Friends upon these important points. There is no obscurity nor indefiniteness about this testimony. It has been abundantly exhibited and ably maintained by hundreds of preachers and writers for more than two centuries. I refrain from quoting largely from their works, solely for the sake of brevity. I need hardly say that I alone am responsible for the accuracy or otherwise of the following statement as representing the belief of the Society. It does not profess to deal much with what are called the "peculiar testimonies of Friends," but is for the most part confined to the subjects

before named, which are, in truth, cardinal matters of faith common to all the most considerable of the existing Churches of Christ, and in the maintenance of which in Scriptural integrity and soundness, they are all vitally interested.

I make no apology for quoting largely from the Holy Scriptures, inasmuch as it has always been held by "Friends" that all religious teaching must be brought to that test. It is surprising (and would be amusing if the matter were not so serious) that our new teachers appeal to us to accept their interpretation of certain isolated passages of the sacred writings, as though we had never read nor considered them; as though all the eminently holy and devoted men and women who so practically tested the faith of the Society which they adorned,—who lived and died in the most assured belief of the soundness of that faith,—can be thus off-handedly assumed to have been utterly mistaken and deceived.

We assent, of course, that "all have sinned and come short of the glory of God;" all are sinners, in the sense that they have incurred condemnation by transgressing the law of God; all need a Saviour.

Sin cannot be atoned for, nor forgiven, on account of any works of righteousness that men can do—but only for the sake of the sacrifice made on the Cross by our Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, although by nature men are prone to sin,—to self-reliance and self-indulgence, without regard to the will and laws of God—and are therefore unregenerate, "enemies in their minds by wicked works," yet even whilst in this state they are not left to themselves. "The grace of God which bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously and godly in this present world." Christ "received gifts—for the rebellious also, that the Lord God might dwell among them." With the rebellious and with wilful sinners the Holy Spirit pleads. He "reproves the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment." "The light shineth in dark-

ness." "All things that are reprov'd are made manifest by the light." Therefore if any, however comparatively dark and ignorant they may be (including the Heathen, and all who have never heard the Gospel outwardly preached), so far recognise the moral government of God, as either to do or to refrain from doing; if they at all "cease to do evil and learn to do well," in obedience to the voice of Christ in their hearts, such dispositions and acts are acceptable in His sight, and bring a degree of blessing and of satisfaction to the soul. In thus regarding the "light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world," they are brought to Christ the Light. This is, surely, "the Gospel which is preached to every creature which is under heaven," by obeying which, in its earliest and simplest manifestations, people are led from one degree of faithfulness and enlightenment to another; and by perseverance in such obedience they are eventually "led into all truth." He that is faithful in a little is made ruler over more. It is the man who does the will of God who shall "know of the doctrine." John the Baptist, in fulfilling his mission to "prepare the way of the Lord," counselled all who came to him to perform all known duty; and we believe that this remains to be the straight path to true repentance, and to the cross of Christ. People in every state and condition are still to be taught not to "quench the Spirit"; to do what is just and right; to obey all the light they have as the surest way to obtain more. All genuine obedience to the voice of Christ in the heart—*which always, to "saint" and "sinner" alike, counsels pure thoughts and right deeds*—will receive the blessing of God. And the greatest blessing He bestows is to draw men to Christ. ("No man can come to me except the Father which hath sent me, draw him.") Thus, we believe that every right act performed by any human being, from a pure motive; every approximation to holiness and to the image of Christ, so far from being "iniquity" or "deadly doing," is so much towards the soul's peace; so much towards the "preparing of the way

of the Lord "; so much towards the promotion of His kingdom, and glory.

"Take heed," was the advice issued by the Yearly Meeting, "to the convictions of the Holy Spirit, who leads, through unfeigned Repentance, and living faith in the Son of God, to reconciliation with the Father, and to the blessed hope of Eternal Life purchased for us by the one offering of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."

To proceed. Although all sincere obedience and self-denial in response to the pleadings of the Holy Spirit is thus good and acceptable to God, it is needful that this experience should deepen and ripen into that definite state which is described as being "born again," converted, translated completely out of the kingdom of death and darkness into that of life, and light and holiness. "Ye must be born again; except ye be converted, ye shall not see the kingdom of God."

Well, as a simple matter of fact, in by far the greater number of cases, this is a gradual process; in many it is inappreciable as far as each separate advance towards it is concerned. And we judge that in most or all cases of true and lasting change, which wear the appearance of "instantaneous conversion," a large preparation of heart has been previously effected; the matter is not really so sudden as it seems. Where it is otherwise, there is great reason to fear that the apparent change is like the seed sown "by the wayside" or "in stony places," and will soon wither away. It is instructive to note that in the parable those who received the seed in this superficial way are said to have done so "with joy."

But with regard to Conversion, it is evident that the dealings of God, and the experiences of men are infinitely varied. There is the case of the man who has long rebelled against the convictions of the Holy Spirit, and who has thus, by wilful sin, again and again incurred conscious condemnation—who is at length (suddenly as it may seem) broken down and contrited, either by the secret power of Divine Grace, or

under the preaching of the Gospel. He is brought to sincere repentance, and to a full resolve, through the help of God, to amend his life, and to withhold nothing that may be called for either of sacrifice or of service. Beholding the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sin of the world, the peace of God enters his heart as a pledge of reconciliation. He tastes, in due time, the sweetness and the power of the life to come; and, retaining a vivid sense of the sharp contrast which there is between the Kingdom of Darkness and the Kingdom of Light, he is conscious, thenceforth, of a more or less definite period from which to date his "conversion."

On the other hand there are, happily, many cases (especially perhaps in our own Society) in which a guarded education and an early inculcation of the duty of obeying the dictates of the Holy Spirit have tended to preserve the conscience tender, and the mind comparatively pure. There has been known so little of the "depths of Satan," and so much of the peace and safety of following the guidance and obeying the government of the Spirit of Christ; the influx of light and life, the growth in grace, and the regeneration of the soul, have been so gradual, and as it were accumulative, that the individual is not sensible of any one time more than another that can be called the period of conversion. But the fruits of the Spirit are brought forth in rich and increasing abundance; the peace of God fills the heart; and the whole trust of the soul, for justification and sanctification, is in Christ. There can be no reasonable doubt that the conversion is genuine, and such an experience is far more to be desired than the other. We have no sympathy with such sayings as "The greater the sinner, the greater the saint," but should rather say the *less* the sin—from first to last—the better.

James Backhouse says in his Journal:—"I have no recollection of a period of first awakening, but as I grew in understanding I became more enlightened respecting Divine things, and especially in the love of my Saviour."

Dr. Norman Macleod says :—" God's Spirit has surely been with my beloved children since their birth. I don't think they have been converted by any sudden change. They seem to me as growing up in the faith, being educated gradually by the Spirit."

It gives, we think, a sound view of the real nature and end of the Christian dispensation, and of the belief of the Society of Friends, to regard the terms Conversion, Salvation, being "in Christ," and "Belief," even, not so much in the light of intellectual ideas as *spiritual states*.

Thus, a man is converted *in proportion* as he is really changed, sanctified, transferred by the faith and power of Christ from the one kingdom to the other. It is not within the province of men to say that any man is wholly converted, or wholly unregenerate; nor *how far* he is in the one state or the other. That conversion is a gradual process in the soul of a believer is shown by the case of Peter, to whom the Lord said, "When thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren." The dictionary-meaning of the word is—a turning or change from one state to another; and this is the sense in which it is used (*in the very few cases in which it occurs*) in Holy Scripture; *e.g.*, "The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul." "Except ye be converted, *and become as little children*." "If any do err, and one convert (*i.e.* restore) him," &c.

Thus, although Conversion is a very real and definite experience, it is not a thing which is usually perfected in a short period of time. Doubtless, where repentance has been very deep and sincere, and great watchfulness and fidelity are maintained, rapid growth and stability are sometimes experienced.

Similarly the term "in Christ," although it expresses a definitely realised personal interest in the Saviour, clearly admits of degrees. We are to "grow up into Him in all things." And surely it cannot be supposed that the most careless and unfaithful Christian is either as truly or as much "in Christ" as the most devoted and watchful.

A few words upon the term "Believer," and upon the sense in which "belief" is used in the Scripture. "The devils believe." "But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead." Mark the unflinching severity with which our Lord repeatedly tested that which professed to be belief. When at Nazareth the people accepted Him as the Messiah, a few searching words exposed the unsoundness rather than the insincerity of their faith, and they attempted to kill Him. On another similar occasion exactly the same things occurred, and those Jews who "believed" again threatened his life. The multitude that followed Him He rebuked thus: "Why call ye me Lord, Lord, and do not the things that I say?" It is very possible to "believe in vain." Belief ever so firm and sincere in the truth of the Gospel is of no saving avail, unless it include genuine, unfeigned submission and obedience. One son said: "I go, sir," and went not. The other said: "I will not," but afterwards he repented and went. The latter did the will of his father. What a man *does*—viz., in practically and from his heart renouncing the service of the devil—has really more to do with saving faith than what he merely believes. I am jealous of the easy term "believer," as ordinarily understood. A *Christian* is a far more substantial and satisfactory person, to my thinking.

The words "salvation" and "saved" are used in the Bible in a great variety of senses. We are said to be saved by Grace, by Faith (and also *not* by faith *alone*), by Hope, by Baptism (of the Spirit), by Christ's Life as well as His death, by patient continuance in well-doing, by Sanctification. For we are "chosen to salvation by sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the Truth." "For by one offering He hath perfected for ever *them that are sanctified*." A man is said to "save himself and them that hear him." We are to "work out our own salvation," &c.

With the definiteness of meaning of which our modern language admits, we ought not to use even Scripture phrases indefinitely, especially when an important doctrinal difference

is involved. Wherever there is ambiguity or obscurity in the ancient, unprecise, untranslatable idioms, in the twice or thrice transmuted language of our English Bible, we ought surely, as much as possible, to define the sense in which we use the terms. If, then, in answer to my friend's first question, it be said that a man receives "salvation" when he believes, we ask what is meant? *Final* salvation? If so, we say *that* is a dangerous and unscriptural assertion. It is safer—more correct—better, in every sense, to say that when a man believes (in the full meaning of the word) he receives Justification. Thus in Romans :—

"Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation, even so by the righteousness of one, the free gift came upon all men *unto justification of life.*"

He can only be said, then, to receive Eternal Life if we limit the term to mean that which is of the nature and essence of such life. He does not then receive a life which is certain to be eternal. And it is only in this modified sense in which a man can be said to be "saved"—when he believes. If it be *possible* that a believer can lose his state of justification by subsequent unfaithfulness and sin, it is quite clear that he cannot be affirmed to be "saved" until he actually receives the eternal crown.

"He that endureth unto the end shall be saved." "Now is our salvation nearer than when we believed." "Hold fast that thou hast, that no man take thy crown." "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life." "I have finished my course; I have kept the faith, *henceforth* there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness." "For we are made partakers of Christ if we hold the beginning of our confidence stedfast unto the end." "Ye have need of patience, that after ye have done the will of God ye might receive the promise:" "He that putteth his hand to the plough and looking back, is not fit for the kingdom"; "if any man draw back my soul shall have no pleasure in him."

Therefore, to the second question: Does the death of Christ atone for all the sins of the believer? we answer: It does not *necessarily*. If it be held that a man cannot so sin, after he believes, as to forfeit his interest in the atonement, let the doctrine be acknowledged, and then we are at distinct and emphatic issue with all who assert it.

Therefore, also to the third question : Does a man who has once been in a justified state incur condemnation if he sin ? We answer : Yes ; he does.

"Let your yea be yea, &c., lest ye fall into condemnation." "By thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned." "Grudge not lest ye be condemned." "Having condemnation because they have cast off their first faith." "He that resisteth the ordinances of God receives condemnation." "They that drink the cup unworthily drink to themselves condemnation." "Better not to have known, &c., than to depart from the holy commandment."

Consider, too, the parable of the debtor to whom his Lord *had forgiven all*, who was afterwards addressed as a wicked servant, and was "delivered to the tormentors."

"Judgment is to begin at the house of God." "If the righteous *scarcely* be saved." "But and if that evil servant . . . his Lord shall appoint him his portion *with the unbelievers*." "Be not many masters, knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation"—(that is, if we, who profess to teach others, do not act out what we teach), "lest by any means the tempter hath tempted you and our labour be in vain." "For some are already turned aside after Satan."

Read the severe warnings in the Revelation to those who have lapsed in various ways ; even the lukewarm (believer) is threatened with utter rejection. Intimately connected with this view of the liability of the believer to fall into condemnation—if not really identical with it—are the many solemn warnings and counsels to watchfulness and prayer, to humility and fear.

"Watch and pray lest ye enter into temptation." "What I say unto you I say unto all—Watch !" "Be ye also ready ; pass the time of your sojourning here in fear ;" "work out your salvation with fear and trembling. Let us also fear lest a promise," &c.

The foolish virgins were amongst the "called," but were careless and were therefore shut out.

"Be sober, be vigilant, because your adversary," &c. "Take to yourselves the whole armour of God that ye may be able to stand in the evil day." "Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God," &c.

Many more texts might be adduced to prove how very far removed is the true standing of the Christian from that position of intellectual assurance which is assumed by Evangelicalism ; and that there is no warrant for giving to the believer any such exclusive and pre-eminent status. There is, on the contrary, very much to show that his position is one of

increased responsibility and requirement, in proportion to the increased light, grace, and knowledge which are bestowed. And to these, of necessity, loss and punishment are attached in case of failure in the fulfilment of these new obligations.

For although there is abundance of encouragement and of glorious promise in the Bible—to the willing and obedient,—there is perhaps even more of solemn counsel and earnest warning. There is nothing in it of that false delicacy, in dealing with the whole truth of God, which is so apt to creep into all merely human treatment of the matter. Along with the unutterable tenderness and love of our Lord, and often in close juxtaposition with it, there is the severe rebuke and the uncompromising requirement: “Blessed art thou, Simon,” is followed almost immediately by “Get thee behind me, Satan.”

“Behold, therefore, the goodness and severity of God; on them which fell severity—but on thee goodness, *if thou continue in his goodness, otherwise thou also shalt be cut off.*” There is nothing here, nor elsewhere in the Bible, of Evangelistic assurance—which inevitably begets superficial religion—and not seldom, as a most natural and logic sequence, carelessness of life.

So that if the believer *persists* in sinning, and doing despite to the Spirit of grace, he forfeits his final salvation, and becomes a reprobate, *i.e.*, one whom the Holy Spirit has abandoned;—with whom He no longer strives; in whom Jesus Christ no longer dwells.

The bare possibility of this I suppose only a few will question. But, we think, there is in Scripture an amount of testimony which is conclusive that it is a very possible thing indeed; a state truly which *need* not by any means overtake any man, a state which only persistent transgression can plunge him into. But consider the fact *that men fall by little and little*. How many who have utterly fallen, and renounced all profession of religion, have left the right path in the first instance by some little by-way, which seemed to threaten no great danger. We cannot foresee, when we take the first “little” wrong step, wilfully, to *what* it may easily lead us. Read now the following texts:—

"I keep under my body, lest after I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway." "For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance." "But that which beareth thorns and briers is rejected, and is nigh unto cursing : whose end is to be burned."

"To them who by patient continuance in well-doing, seek for glory and honour and immortality, eternal life ; but to them that are contentious and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish upon every soul of man that doth evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile ; for there is no respect of persons with God."

But between this state of utter reprobation and that of the utmost possible perfection, there are various degrees of unwatchfulness and unfaithfulness which also bring upon the soul of the believer their measure of divine displeasure, which is the very essence of condemnation. Condemnation is the being excluded or banished from the love, favour, peace, and presence of God.

"Taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of His power."

And surely when a believer sins, he loses the witness of the Spirit that he is at peace with God, and feels certain evidence that he has incurred condemnation.

"If our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart and knoweth all things, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence towards God, and hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before Him."

Indeed, if his spiritual senses are quickened as they ought to be, he knows that sin to him who has tasted of the good Word of God and the powers of the world to come, is ten-fold more worthy of condemnation than it was before his conversion. He that knew not his master's will, &c., shall be beaten with few stripes ; but he that knew it, and prepared not himself, &c., shall be beaten with many stripes. What indeed is the difference between a "sinner" who sins, and a "believer" who does likewise, unless it be that the latter is by far the *greater sinner* of the two ?

In answer to the third question : "Does a man cease to be in Christ and to have life, the moment he sins ?" we have

before shown that "a believer" is not *necessarily*, in the full sense of the words, "in Christ." It is a phrase which can scarcely be said to be used in Scripture at all in the sense in which it is now popular. One of the very few cases in which it occurs is in connection with *incompleteness*—"Babes in Christ." A man is in Christ in proportion as he has "put on Christ," and in proportion as Christ is in him by His Spirit. *In Christ Jesus*, neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision, *but a new creature*. This "new creature" is the measure of the extent to which a man is in Christ. If any one who is measurably in Christ sins wilfully, he puts himself so far back again—*out of Christ*, for "*in Him*, is no sin."

Then as regards Life, the case is just the same. It is certainly only a foretaste—the dawning—of eternal life that the believer at first receives. If he continues faithful it grows brighter and nearer; it "increases more and more unto the perfect day." "Now is our salvation nearer than when we believed." But if, on the other hand, he persists in carelessness and falls back into sin, he *may* plunge himself into worse darkness and a more hopeless death than ever. "The last state of that man is worse than the first." "For if, after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning."

Indeed, we believe it to be a fundamental error, which underlies all the superficial religious teaching of the day, to represent human experience in religious matters as definite and complete at some one period (and that period rather the beginning than the end of the race), instead of incipient and progressive. This is the case with reference to conversion, knowledge of the truth, the attainment of the stature of the perfect man, the growth in grace, and even in that knowledge of God *which is eternal life*, and, therefore, of eternal life itself. These all (as well as holiness, light, peace, rest, strength, stability) are progressive attainments; and is there

any reason to suppose that they will cease to be progressive throughout all eternity? When a man is conscious of the forgiveness of his past sins through faith in Christ, he has made a great advance, certainly, towards salvation—not the first step, as is sometimes said; yielding to the convictions of the Holy Spirit for sin, repentance, crying to God for mercy and light are previous and altogether indispensable steps. He then, also, enters into comparative rest—a rest which, like all his other experience, ought to grow and increase as he approaches the time and the land where alone it is perfected. “Take my yoke upon you and learn of Me, and ye shall find rest.” Is it not *in proportion* as we take Christ’s yoke upon us and learn of Him that we find rest to our souls?

It will, I suppose, be obvious to those who have studied this phase of religious thought that there is still a matter to be considered upon which it all hangs, that is: the true sense in which sin is “covered” by the imputed righteousness of Christ. We have before stated that it does cover all the past sin of the truly penitent believer (“a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of *sins that are past*”). That is a necessary step towards the full attainment of Righteousness. The question then comes, Does God thenceforth “reckon” righteous a man who is really not so? Is that possible? Rather is not Justification the door—and *only* the door to the Temple of personal Holiness? But, then, we are told that the believer must *remain*, in effect, subject to sin, that he cannot escape from the commission of it. And, this being so, that the only righteousness to which he ever attains is what is called the imputed righteousness of Christ, which he appropriates once for all, by faith. *The idea that we need not regard our feelings is an idea which is very necessary to be associated with that of permanent sinfulness*; but we look upon it as the expression of an error which is as philosophically absurd as it is religiously false and mischievous. It is only through the medium of the feelings (not excluding the intellect so far as spiritual matters are within its province) that man is reached

at all by the Divine Spirit. The witness of the Spirit with our spirits that we are children of God is purely a matter of spiritual feeling. It is the indispensable duty of the Christian to watch carefully over the feelings of his heart. From the heart proceeds all that defiles a man, and it is *there* that the Divine Monitor, the Comforter, manifests His love, His counsel, His strengthening and sanctifying power. It is, in fact, by this influence upon our spiritual feelings and perceptions that the great work of the soul's redemption and salvation is effected. We should be inclined to warn anyone whose feelings are not happy and peaceful to be very diligent and prayerful, in order to ascertain why they are not so. Surely God does not leave His faithful children eventually a prey to feelings which are out of harmony with Himself. He gives "the spirit of love and of power and of a sound mind." If we submit patiently to His baptizing power, and seek to *obey* the gospel of Christ, abiding in Him, and looking to Him in all things, He makes heart and soul and mind—the whole seat and source of the feelings—pure and healthy and peaceful. And what if, for the perfecting of this glorious result, the work be life-long?

"Let no man think that sudden, in a minute,
All is accomplished, and the work is done;
Though with thine earliest dawn, thou shouldst begin it,
Scarce were it ended, in thy setting sun."

But we ought to be making continual progress; and to this end we must co-operate with Divine Grace.

"Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling." "Let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing."

The *progressive* nature of the establishment of the "kingdom of God" in the soul is illustrated by the following passages:—

"We are changed into the same image from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord." "For he that hath, to him shall be given." "So the kingdom of God is as if a man should cast seed into the ground; first the blade then the ear," &c. It is "like a grain of mustard seed," &c., "like leaven." "But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." "As new born babes desire the sincere milk of the Word that ye may grow thereby." "Not as though I had

already attained, but I follow after, if by any means, I may apprehend that," &c. "Leaving the things that are behind, &c., I press *toward the mark*, for the prize." "Leaving the first principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on to perfection."

See also an eminently practical, sober, summary of the process of religious conviction and establishment in the truth, contained in the 1st Epistle of Peter,—

"Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time. Casting all your care upon Him, for He careth for you. Be sober, be vigilant, because your adversary, the devil, as a roaring lion goeth about seeking whom he may devour; whom resist, steadfast in the faith. But the God of all grace, after that ye have suffered awhile, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you."

And James, exactly to the same purpose,—

"Submit yourselves therefore to God; resist the devil and he will flee from you. Cleanse your hands ye sinners and purify your hearts ye double-minded. Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord and He shall lift you up."

And again,—

"The Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and *into the patient waiting for Christ*."

Finally, then, in direct opposition to the doctrine of permanent sinfulness, covered by what is called the imputed righteousness of Christ, we maintain that the believer is called to the attainment of real holiness. That the change which ought to be eventually effected in him by his conversion, and subsequent obedience, is an entire renewal of his nature; a putting off the old man with his deeds, and putting on the new man which is renewed in knowledge after the image of Him that created him, "which after God, is created in righteousness and true holiness."

The "pleading for sin for term of life" by the professors of their day was a chief cause of sorrow and controversy with the early "Friends." They held that when true repentance had resulted in bringing a man to Christ, the power of His grace and spirit was sufficient to deliver him from the bondage (the actual commission) of sin; to make that possible to him, which "the law" could not effect. "For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh—that *the righteousness of the law might*

be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit."

It is one of the most curious and wonderful facts with which I am acquainted—so wonderful that I should not have thought it possible if it were not before our eyes—that the doctrine of the unchanged nature, and the life-long sinfulness of the Christian, as the purpose and appointment of God and our Saviour, should be held to be deducible from the Bible. The New Testament is so full of the opposite, that many pages of this pamphlet would not suffice if I were to transcribe all that emphatically supports what has been called—for want of a better term—"Scriptural perfection." At the risk, however, of wearying the reader, I must be allowed to call his attention to a good deal of testimony upon this point. I associate with it the further belief of our Society, that as true peace is only to be known by genuine repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ, so it can only be maintained and perfected by continual watchfulness and obedience. And, further, that "the believer" is put upon his trial as to whether he will hold fast the beginning of his confidence steadfast unto the end; whether he will keep the word of his patience; whether he will "watch and pray" always, that he may be counted worthy to escape, and to stand before the Son of Man.

"For the wrath of God is revealed from Heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness." Christ came "to make an end of sin and bring in everlasting righteousness"; "to destroy the works of the devil"; "to purify unto Himself a peculiar people zealous of good works." "Unto you, first, God having raised up His Son Jesus, sent Him to bless you in turning away every one of you from his iniquities." "Forgiveness of sins and inheritance among them that are sanctified."

Consider the Sermon on the Mount:—from beginning to end an emphatic teaching that it is real moral goodness and rightness, *on a religious basis*, which God requires and blesses. *Not a word about faith in it; all good feeling and good works!*

"Whosoever, therefore, shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven; but whosoever shall do and teach them he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For I say unto you that except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees ye

shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven. Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Every good tree bringeth forth good fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit. Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down and cast into the fire. Not every one that saith unto me Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. I never knew ye, depart from me ye that work iniquity."

And how emphatic are the closing verses of this memorable sermon:—"Whosoever heareth these sayings of mine and *doeth* them," &c.

"He that hath my commandments and keepeth them he it is that loveth me. How shall we that are dead unto sin live any longer therein? Bringing into subjection every *thought* to the obedience of Christ. But now, being made free from sin, and become the servants of God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life. I beseech you, therefore, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God. Adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour *in all things*. He that saith he abideth in Him, ought himself so to walk even as He walked. He that doeth good is of God, but he that doeth evil hath not seen God. Whatsoever we ask we receive of Him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight. He that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in Him. Whosoever abideth in Him sinneth not; whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God. This is the love of God that ye keep his commandments. If ye keep my commandments ye shall abide in my love. If ye know that He is righteous ye know that every one that doeth righteousness is born of Him. If a man, therefore, purge himself from these he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified and meet for the master's use, and prepared unto every good work. Let every man prove his *own work*, and then he shall have rejoicing in himself alone and not in another. Be not deceived; God is not mocked. Whatsoever a man soweth that also shall he reap. As many as walk according to this rule peace be on them. That we may be holy and without blame before Him in love. And you hath He quickened. And such were some of you; but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified. Walk as children of light. For the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth, proving what is acceptable unto the Lord, and have no fellowship, &c. Blameless and harmless, the son of God without rebuke. According to the working whereby He is able even to subdue all things unto himself. If thy hand or foot offend thee cut them off, &c. Know ye not that ye are the temple of God? If any man defile the temple of God him shall God destroy. Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Awake to righteousness and sin not. Wherefore come out from amongst them and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing and I will receive you. When I am weak, then am I strong. I can do all things through Christ which strengthened me. Now, I pray to God ye do no evil. Who gave Himself for our sins that He might deliver us from this present evil world. Walk in the spirit and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh. They which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God. They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts."

"Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the Truth. But be ye doers of the word, not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. Whoso

bridleth not his tongue, that man's religion is vain. Faith without works is dead. That they do good, that they be rich in good works, laying up for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life. Having the form of godliness, but denying the power thereof; they profess that they know God, but in works they deny Him. For in that He hath suffered being tempted, He is able to succour them that are tempted. For God is faithful who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able, but will with the temptation make a way of escape. How much more shall the blood of Christ, who, through the Eternal Spirit, offered Himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God? Be filled with the knowledge of His will in all knowledge and spiritual understanding. Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ. Be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your minds, that ye may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God. That He may establish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God.

"This is the will of God, even your sanctification. Let us draw near with a full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience. I exercise myself to have always a conscience void of offence toward God and toward man. For if we sin wilfully, &c. Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin. Let us have grace whereby we may serve God acceptably, with reverence and godly fear, for our God is a consuming fire. Now the God of peace, &c., make you perfect in every good work to do His will, working in you that which is well pleasing in His sight. Having, therefore, these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of the Lord."

Such is a *portion only* of the witness of the New Testament to this fundamental doctrine of the Gospel of Christ. Can you, my readers, resist the conviction that we are called to a complete victory over the dominion of sin; to be actual "partakers of His holiness," according as

"His divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who hath called us to glory and virtue; whereby are given to us exceeding great and precious promises; that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust?"

If you do not *prefer* to believe that you must remain sinners, I invite you to embrace this far loftier and happier and more Scriptural faith.

"Abstain from all appearance of evil, and the very God of peace sanctify you wholly, and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Faithful is He that calleth you, who also will do it."

And if through unwatchfulness you fall into sin, go again to God for mercy, and remember that you have still an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. Seek

humbly, "a place of repentance," and if it be again mercifully granted that you be washed afresh in the blood of the covenant, go and sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto you. Be assured that your present peace and your final salvation depend upon your constancy and faithfulness (the fruit of genuine and living faith). "That ye be not slothful, but followers of them who *through faith and patience* inherit the promises." Let me add some of the oft-repeated assurance of Scripture that the final sentence will be according to the deeds done in the body. And this is not all condemnation—but includes *reward* for every good deed done for the love of Christ. This doctrine of the Gospel, which is as clearly declared in Holy Scripture as any other, is one of those things which is too much negatived, lest it should, I suppose, encourage the idea that there is some merit and desert, in good works. Be this as it may, we need not hesitate to make conspicuous the promises which Christ and His Apostles have thus given to us.

"For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ. That every man may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad. The Father, who without respect of persons, judgeth according to every man's work. Blessed is the man that endureth temptation, for when he is tried he shall receive the crown of righteousness that fadeth not away. Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee. Behold, I come quickly, and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be. The Son of Man shall come in the glory of the Father; and then He shall reward every man according to his works: and every one that hath forsaken houses, &c., for my name's sake, shall receive an hundred-fold, and shall inherit everlasting life.

"Well done, good and faithful servant: *because* thou hast been faithful, &c.

"Blessed are ye when men shall revile you, for great is your reward in heaven. Whoso receiveth a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet's reward. Love your enemies, &c., and your reward shall be great. Every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labour. If any man's work abide, he shall receive a reward. Let no man beguile you of your reward. For whosoever shall give you a cup of cold water in my name, shall not lose his reward. Cast not away your confidence, which hath great recompense of reward. Look to yourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward."

These are a very few, comparatively, of the passages which might be cited to show that God is a rich rewarder of them that diligently seek Him.

There are yet other features of Evangelicalism which appear to me to be important retrogressions from sound faith and practice. Upon some of these I will add a few merely suggestive words.

In presenting the work and offices of the Son, is not the Father, who sent Him, too much lost sight of, or at all events dissociated? Is it not represented that God, the Father, is an austere Being, who needs to be "propitiated;" a Being not revealed nor *represented* in the self-sacrificing love of Christ,—one with Him in that Divine compassion? Is not the love of Christ in danger of being *opposed* to the wrath of God?—the mercy of Christ to the justice of God? Whereas, surely the Father and Son are ONE in the whole economy of mercy and salvation?

Then, the prominence given to public "confession" is certainly a dangerous thing, and it is more than likely that it is a very delusive thing. It tends to a religion which consists more in words than in life; it brings to the front forward and self-confident people, and discourages diffident and retiring ones, whose Christianity, nevertheless, is quite as likely to be deep and vital. *Stimulating* expression from immature Christians is as though a man who has a lily-bulb planted in his garden, should dig it up periodically to see if it is growing. Is the process likely to do the plant good?

Does not Evangelicalism too much ignore the religion of every-day life? Its tendency is—to substitute some distinct religious activity for that which is, in fact, by far the largest and most important sphere of practical religion—the government of the individual soul, and the conscientious fulfilment of every duty of social and commercial life. This is hardly reckoned as "Christian work;"—whereas, in truth, it is, in the providence of God, the one indispensable work of every life, and necessarily almost the exclusive work of very many lives.

Public prayer is made, unsuitably, frequent, and "customary." We appear to think that "we shall be heard for our much speaking." The man who lives continually in the

spirit of prayer is not likely to be the readiest to engage in vocal offerings. It is said of George Fox that his "awfulness in prayer" was remarkable. Can *anything of the sort* be said of the average utterances at modern "prayer meetings"? It needs, we think, a very special unction and requirement to appear in public prayer; and anything approaching to calling upon each other to pray we hold to be altogether inadmissible.

We have already incidentally referred to the unwarrantable attempt to draw an absolutely sharp line between the "converted" and "unconverted." This seems to be a *sine quâ non* of Evangelicalism. It is an attempt which is not only utterly futile, but certainly productive of uncharitableness and disunion in a religious community.

In conclusion, I entreat all our members at this juncture to give earnest attention to these things. They are not simply different aspects of truth. The two systems are utterly opposed to one another—perfectly irreconcilable. It is of the utmost interest and importance to our Society, and to the Church of Christ in general, to decide what shall be its future testimony to the truth. We, surely, are not about to renounce our well-tried articles of religious belief for which hundreds have laid down their lives; testimonies which have been for two centuries as "lights set on a hill" to the religious world; which have largely deepened and spiritualised the whole Church of Christ, and which it is still as important as ever to uphold in the sight of the nations. Will you have Quakerism or Evangelicalism? They are not both right. Unless the former has been throughout an utter delusion and mistake, the latter is so to a very serious extent. In the seventeenth century Evangelicalism railed at Quakerism in unmeasured terms, and denied it, in the name of Christianity; and they can no more "walk together" in the present day. Surely it becomes us to examine the ground very carefully before we step so far away from the faith of our fathers, or even actively countenance the popular teaching of the day, which, whilst it professes to exalt that most glorious truth, the loving self-sacrifice of the Redeemer, clouds and sullies it, we believe, with such superficial and false doctrine, as, if it take root and spread, will assuredly bear bitter fruit—will enfeeble and seriously endanger the Church of Christ.

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